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OUR FRENCH ALLIES

IN THE

REVOLUTION

AND OTHER ADDRESSES.

BY

OSIAH
collins
J. C. PUMPELLY.

MORRISTOWN.

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NEW JERSEY.

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“Here let there be what the earth waits for--*exalted manhood*. What America longs for is personalities--grand persons to counter-act its materialities. For it is the rule of the universe that corn shall serve man and not man corn.”--*Ralph Waldo Emerson*.

INTRODUCTION.

The early history of a people is always its heroic period.

In it material is always to be found upon which patriotism and loyalty best flourish.

It is not so much a great accumulation of historical facts that we need as it is the vivid presentation of almost any incidents which will interest us in and acquaint us with the indomitable spirit of '76.

The writer, himself an enthusiastic and accurate student of the heroic period in American history, is entitled to our sincere and appreciative gratitude for refreshing our memories in so attractive a way, as do the following monograms, of the great deeds and the greater men that underlie the splendid achievements of these United States.

As Secretary of the New Jersey Society of the Sons of the Revolution and with a picturesque style in composition he has every equipment for selecting and publishing salient bits of the Revolutionary days well adapted to teach us and our children of that great love of human liberty which has made America, the world over, a synonym for human progress. "H."

Morristown, N. J.

Nov. 1889.



ADDRESS

*Delivered at a meeting of the Washington Association,
at Morristown, on February 22, 1888,*

BY J. C. PUMPELLY.

MR. PRESIDENT AND FELLOW MEMBERS OF THE WASHINGTON ASSOCIATION :—

On December 30, 1799, just 16 days after the death of the Father of his Country, Congress by Resolution and the President by Proclamation designated the 22d of February as a day dedicated to his memory, and thus it is that from the land of granite and ice, to the home of the palmetto and the orange, in every region of our broad country, the heart of patriotism warms to-day to the name of Washington.

With this feeling, we, too, have assembled ourselves, and standing here on ground sacred to the cause of liberty, and in the midst of mementoes permeated with the spirit and wisdom of a time which tried men's souls we *would pay our tribute* of honor not only to the *founder of a nation*, but to the memory of those of our own blood who fought and suffered by his side.

The time and place are both replete with inspiring influences, and by their aid I hope to be able to give you, at least an outlined picture of the great Chieftain who, on that bleak first of December, 1779, entered these portals as the honored guest of Mrs. Theodosia Ford.

Speaking of Washington as a strategist, General Carrington, in his address before the New Jersey Historical Society, says, "The term *retreat* is a misnomer for Washington's march to the Delaware. It was not a retreat but only the part of a great strategic plan." Remembering the necessities and perils of the situation in New York, and how impossible it was for Washington to do otherwise than he did, I cannot go thus far, but one thing is very sure, from the time the war took definite shape until the final stroke at Yorktown, New Jersey became the Headquarters of American resistance—the strategic centre and the chief battle field of the Revolution.

Ever mindful of Howe's true policy and the value of New York to the British Crown, Washington conceived and wrought out a counter policy, and with unexcelled wisdom he concentrated all the possibilities of a successful resistance to the enemy within a space so small, yet with fastnesses so unassailable, and a plan of observation so complete, that, as Botta the historian, says: "By an army almost reduced to extremity *Philadelphia was saved, Pennsylvania protected, New Jersey recovered*, and a victorious army laid under the necessity of quitting all thought of acting offensively in order to defend itself."

Such, in a few words, was Washington as a strategist, and it is the pride of every Jerseyman that here, within a radius of hardly one hundred miles, was the arena upon which were enacted the events which were to change the whole future of a nation. "No nobler figure," says Gladstone, speaking of the great commander, "ever stood in the forefront of a nation's life," and it was in those days here in Morristown, the very darkest before the dawn, when the character of the man was most severely tried and his great attributes as a leader of men made manifest.

At that date Washington was 47 years of age, in stature over six feet, perfectly erect, of marked bearing and nobility of presence, and, as Jefferson says, "the best horseman of his age." His eyes were gray, his hair hazel-brown, his complexion light and his countenance severe and thoughtful, while his person and whole deportment exhibited an unaffected and indescribable dignity unmingled with haughtiness, of which all who approached him were sensible. In this connection *The New Jersey Gazette* of Dec. 6th, 1779, contains the following, from an English correspondent:—"Washington is a tall, well made man, rather large boned, with features manly and bold, eyes of a bluish cast and very lively; hair a deep brown, face long and marked with smallpox; complexion sunburnt, and his countenance sensible, composed and thoughtful. There is a remarkable air of dignity about him, with a striking degree of gracefulness. He has an excellent understanding without much quickness; is strictly just, vigilant, gen-

erous ; an affectionate husband, a faithful friend, a father to the deserving soldier, gentle in his manners, but rather reserved. Is a total stranger to religious prejudices, but in his morals irreproachable and was never known to exceed the bounds of temperance. Candor, sincerity, affability and simplicity seem to be the striking features of his character, until an occasion offers of displaying the most determined bravery and independence of spirit."

In his moral aspect he was no saint, and by no means, as one writer puts it, "well nigh super-human." For while his integrity and virtue were firmly based in a truly religious faith, yet he was a man of very strong passions, and as Jefferson says: "showed himself on several occasions 'tremendous in his wrath.'"

It has been circumstantially stated that when the militia, in New York, in the Fall of '76 turned and ran, and again at the time of Lee's disobedience at Monmouth, Washington was transported with passion and swore roundly. Possibly he did, for on the two occasions in question, he was sorely tried.

No doubt much of that power in word and pen, which inspired those about him to endure, and to do as they did in this terrible winter, sprang from his *passionate*, but *usually subjugated nature*. In this respect he resembles most of the great men who have moved and controlled their fellow men to the accomplishment of great deeds.

One of those traits of character, which (next to unyielding firmness and a freedom from jealousy almost unknown in celebrated captains) peculiarly distinguished Washington was a *punctilious exactness as to money matters*, and a fine sense of justice, where not alone his own but the rights of others were concerned.

When he took up his residence in this house, and accepted the freely offered hospitality of the widow, Theodosia Ford, he made an inventory of all articles which were appropriated to his use, and when about to depart in June 1780, he inquired of his hostess whether everything had been returned to her. Her reply was, "All but one silver table-spoon." The General made due note of the loss, and not long afterwards she received from him a note, inclosing the identical spoon.

Major Gibbs (the same, I suppose, who was in command of the "Life Guards") was caterer to the General's household for some years, and in Washington's personal book of account with the United States (a *fac simile* of which is in our Morristown Library) occurs the following entry:—

"May 13th— By Cash - - - L. 113-16 s."

and this foot-note : "This sum stands in my account as a credit to the public, but I can find no charge against me in any of the public offices. Where the mistake lies I know not, but I wish it could be ascertained, as I have no desire to injure or be injured."

Without doubt this roof has sheltered more of the famous men of the Revolution than any other in our land. Generals, Statesmen, Foreign Envoys and members of the Continental Congress, all gathered here to meet the great rebel chief. Of the latter's own band of co-patriots, there was the requient Quaker but valiant General, Nathaniel Greene; the able artillerist Knox, "Mad" Anthony Wayne the hero of Stony Point, the veteran disciplinarian Steuben, the polished Kosciuszko, the brilliant Alexander Hamilton, the accomplished Stirling; also there was the hero of Bennington John Stark, and Washington's Chief of Engineers, the talented Chevalier Duportail—of the French Engineers—who was made a Major General for his services at the Siege of Yorktown. A group unparalleled in the world, and its grand central figure was the man, the anniversary of whose birth, we are here to commemorate to-day.

Prof. Lieber says of him : "He appears to us the brave historic model of immaculate patriotism, a man not brilliant, but sound to the inmost recess of his large heart." As an instance of this we can but recall the brave but kindly words in which Washington reprimanded the traitor, Arnold, whose Court Martial here at the Norris Tavern, was one of the most important events of that most distressing winter.

“Never,” says one writer, “was the sword of justice more delicately tempered, and a smoother wound given to an irritable conscience, than when wielded by the hand of the Commander-in-Chief on this occasion.”

Washington has been wrongfully called by one of our late writers a cold and austere man. Certainly there was a certain dignity and majesty about him, which did not belong ordinarily to men, and then, too, as Professor Lieber says, no endearing names were bestowed upon him by his soldiers; and yet, while in this very house, so intense was his anxiety and sympathy for the sufferings of his brave troops, then encamped at Kimble Hill, he wrote to President Reed, of Pennsylvania, entreating aid and supplies to keep his army from disbanding, saying, “We have never experienced a like extremity at any period of the war.” (Life of Reed, II. 189.) Again he wrote, on January 8th, “The troops, both officers and men, have been almost perishing with want,” yet feelingly he added, “they have borne their sufferings with a patience that merits the approbation and ought to excite the sympathies of their countrymen.”

To Schuyler he wrote: “Sometimes the army has been five or six days together without bread; at other times as many days without meat, and once or twice two or three days without either. I hardly thought it possible at one period that we should be able to keep the army together, nor could it have been done, if not for the exertions of the magistrates of the several Counties of this State, on whom I was obliged to call.”

It must be remembered too, that, though these troops arrived December 14th, it was not until two months afterwards that the huts were completed, so that they could be in any way sheltered. Of the money, Marshall in Vol. IV, of his *Life of Washington*, says: "The pay of a Major General would not have compensated an express rider; that of a Captain would not have furnished the shoes in which he marched to lead his company against the enemy."

It is needless to add that many of the poor soldiers had neither money nor shoes, and it was told to me by a former employee at these Headquarters, that Washington once—so Mrs. Ford informed him—noticed such a barefooted patriot passing the house and immediately went to his rooms and brought out a pair of shoes, having an excellent pair of buckles on them. Noticing these last, but not removing them, he gave the shoes to the grateful soldier with the one injunction, "Take them, my man, but do not sell the buckles for rum." The great Commander's unselfish thoughtfulness for others was marked by many incidents in the life here at Headquarters, as his sympathetic care for the young soldier Ford who was brought home wounded, and the careful way in which when an alarm was sounded and the Life Guards would prepare to barricade the house, he would go into the rooms of Lady Washington and Mrs. Ford, draw closer the curtains of their bed and cheer them by words of encouragement.

Those indeed were bitter days, and yet amid them all

the great Commander never lost courage or faltered in his faith. At that ink-stained desk in the office, or at the dispatch table in the parlor, he sat and penned letters of advice and encouragement to a hesitating Congress, and to vacillating Governors, which for depth of judgment and fervor of zeal have never been surpassed.

And so it was, that more and more through these weeks of cold, fatigue, distress and starvation, the men he led learned how wholly his heart was with them, and in return gave him their devoted service. They knew that whatever else might freeze, there was nothing cold about their dignified and stately, but slightly excitable General. And, so firm was his nature, intrigues could not destroy him, and every assailing force would shatter like earthenware as soon as it came into collision with the solid fabric of his character.

The most interesting evidence of this dignity of character is probably found in the letters of those French officers (to whom we owe so much) and the reports of the French Diplomats. All of which go to show that he was really more than a soldier, more than an ordinary man; also, that there was a certain majesty and power in his nature, which in God's providence assured the success of the Government from the moment he took it in hand. But this assurance might have been barren indeed, if it had not been for those indefatigable French Allies, among whom especially to be remembered is Vice-Admiral Comte d'Estaing, who at the close of the Revolution commanded the combined land and

naval forces of France and Spain, and so threatened the safety of the West Indies, that George III and Lord North were constrained to acknowledge our independence.

Like Lafayette, d'Estaing recognized that Washington was at all times planning for the ultimate *founding* and *creating*, out of the thirteen disjointed Colonies, a *nation* which should hold in its hands the destiny of a great people, if not the destiny of the whole world. It is in this light I would have Washington always appear in the minds and hearts of every youth in this country; and to this end I would have every school in the land so thoroughly Americanized that each one would become a nursery of *patriotism*, and thus aid in eliminating from our midst those *pestiferous ideas* which have become so freely imported from the *beer cellars* and *socialistic conclaves* of Europe.

But so far the picture I have tried to outline for you has been unrelieved by one single humorous incident; and yet there were lights, as well as shadows, in the life those heroes led here amid the snow clad hills of Morris. Would that we could in imagination look in upon the group of officers, as they gathered about their Chief, at "Orderly Hours" in the old log cabin headquarters, or sat around that old table in the dining-room. Possibly the following letter written about that time to "Smythe's Journal," in New York, may help to lighten somewhat the sombreness of the scene:—

"Thirteen is a number peculiarly belonging to the rebels. A party of naval prisoners, lately returned from Jersey, say 'That the rations among the rebels are thirteen dried

clams per day ; that the titular Lord Stirling takes thirteen glasses of grog every morning, has thirteen enormous rumbunches on his nose, and that (when duly impregnated) he always makes thirteen attempts before he can walk ; that Mr. Washington has thirteen toes on his feet (the extra ones having grown since the Declaration of Independence,) and the same number of teeth in each jaw ; that the Sachem Seuyler has a top-knot of thirteen stiff hairs, which erect themselves on the crown of his head when he grows mad ; that old Putnam had thirteen pounds of his posteriors bit off in an encounter with a Connecticut bear ('twas then he lost the balance of his mind;) that it takes thirteen Congress paper dollars to equal one penny sterling ; that Polly Wayne was just thirteen hours in subduing Stony Point, and as many seconds in leaving it ; that a well organized rebel household has thirteen children, all of whom expect to be Generals and members of the High and Mighty Congress of the 'Thirteen United States,' when they attain thirteen years ; that Mrs. Washington has a mottled Tom cat (which she calls in a complimentary way 'Hamilton') with thirteen yellow rings around his tail, and that his flaunting it suggested to the Congress the adopting of the same number of stripes for the rebel flag.'"

But my discourse, all insufficient as it is, has already been protracted unduly and I must close.

Among all the conspicuous names which will be honored to-day let us remember with tender gratitude that (and I use the words of our favorite historian, President Tuttle,) each

old parish in our County has its heroes, and each old church was a shrine at which brave men and women bowed in God's fear, consecrating their all to their country."

So, instead of referring our children to Greek and Roman patriots, we have but to call up for them the names of our own men and woman, who have here amid the hills of Morris wrought out for us this heritage, so much grander, so much nobler than they themselves ever dreamed. And whatever betide and in every peril let us remember *Washington*.

"Let his great example stand colossal seen of every
land,

And keep the soldier firm, the statesman pure ;
Till in all lands and through all human story
The path of Duty be the way to Glory."

Washington's Headquarters,
Morristown, Feb, 22nd, 1888.

Our French Allies in the Revolution.

BY

J. C. PUMPELLY.

*Read before the New Jersey Historical Society, at Trenton,
January 22, 1889.*

“I am proud of France,” wrote Pere Hyacinthe to an American clergyman; “I am proud of France, but I deem it as one of her most solid glories to have contributed to the independence of your noble country.”

This eloquent utterance voices the sentiment which Frenchman generally have entertained toward the United States. The love of freedom glowed alike in the heart of both peoples from the time of the first resistance in America to the tyrannous impositions of Great Britain. Indeed, the time was ripe for them to fraternize. But three days before the British troops had entered Boston to suppress the kindling spirit of liberty, the death of an unworthy king and the succession of another more excellent and deserving had given heart to the friends of freedom in France and delivered their country from impending ruin.

The writings of French litterateurs had been preparing the public mind for a new departure in religious, social and governmental affairs. The men and women of culture and refinement were eagerly contemplating the advent of a period when the hoary despotism of the Middle Ages should pass away, and be succeeded by the dawn and noonday of civil and spiritual freedom for mankind. Such men as our beloved Marquis de La Fayette had caught the inspiration and were prompt to contribute both wealth and influence, and to unsheath their swords to help bring forward the coming epoch. To them the first clash of arms in New England was the signal for action, and they hastened to give their aid and personal service. Others more reflective and conscious of responsibility directed their endeavors toward the impelling of a reluctant government to take part in the great conflict, and co-operate with the Americans in their unequal struggle. The new theories which the savants and publicists of France had inculcated, thus brought forth their fruit, thirty, sixty, and an hundred fold. These men indeed built wiser than they knew.

The good understanding between France and America has ever since been regarded by far-seeing minds as of vital importance to both countries. Edmond About, in his passionate arraignment of the Emperor Napoleon III, breaks out into the following invective: "The great American Republic was from the beginning the friend and ally of France. You constrained it to forget that it owes its existence to France."

In this declaration we have the exact statement of the sentiment which prevails among leading minds in that country. They are vividly awake to the urgent necessity of the most cordial relations between the two peoples, a sentiment which we should most fully reciprocate. At the same time our excellent friends do not hesitate to remind us very significantly of our indebtedness to them in the struggle for national independence. They love to echo the sentiment of Minister Genet to Secretary Jefferson: "But for France, Americans would now be vassals to England."

We may plead in extenuation of this claim, that France had already shown herself unable to cope with Great Britain and her colonies upon this Continent. In the Seven Years' War, which was ended with the Treaty of Paris, in 1763, she had been shorn of her vast possessions in Asia and America, and obliged to raze her fortifications at Dunkirk and submit to the indignity of a resident English Commissioner at that place, whose word was law. We may readily presume that her statesmen deeply resented these humiliations, and were on the alert to foster any movement that would assure revenge upon their triumphant adversary.

It is certain that Baron John De Kalb traveled extensively in the British Colonies during the interval between the Treaty of Paris and the outbreak of the American Revolution. He made himself familiar with the prevailing public sentiment, and kept the French Ministry apprised of his observations. A change of Ministers for a time suspended his correspondence; but we may be confident that France,

finding herself unable to maintain her foot-hold upon this Continent, was watching her opportunity to uproot the British Dominion in her turn. The irritation in the Colonies at the prohibition of the trade with European countries and the West Indies, and the arbitrary suppression of manufacturing industries, was now brought to a crisis by direct taxation and the introduction of soldiery into the Province of Massachusetts.

Turgot, perhaps one of the most far-seeing of the French statesmen, and very similar in character to our own Washington, was awake to the portents of the time. As early as April, 1776, he predicted to the Ministers of the French King the issue of the American conflict. "The supposition of an absolute separation between Great Britain and her colonies," he declared, "seems to me infinitely probable, and the result of the conflict will be a total revolution between Europe and America in political and commercial relations. There is no remedy but submission to the inevitable, and obstinate resistance will involve great peril to the mother country." (Schæder, *Life and Times of Washington*, Volume I, p. 686.)

Many other distinguished Frenchmen believed as Turgot. Some of these, sympathizing enthusiastically with the colonists, and acting under the counsel of Count Vergennes, secretly furnished them with large amounts of arms and ammunition. This was done without any official sanction or approval of the Government, which ostensibly took the side of Great Britain. The Spanish Court, also, through

the mercantile house of Roderique Hostages and Co., advanced a million livres (\$185,000) and the French Court an equal sum, a loan to be paid in American products. In connection with these movements took place the deception of Arthur Lee, which put our government decidedly in the wrong and led to a controversy and litigation of fifty years. La Fayette himself, always foremost in promptness, raised a force of two thousand men, equipping and disciplining them and expending more than \$160,000 of his own private fortune.

The Treaty of Alliance, however, between the United States and France, was a later occurrence. Sentiment, sympathy and policy had dictated the previous action, but statecraft and diplomacy required other grounds to justify open participation in the conflict. It must appear that the Americans were able to give active co-operation of a character formidable to the British Government, and this was abundantly shown in the capture of Gen. Burgoyne in 1777.

Hale, in his "Life of Washington," has indicated three great successes achieved by the Americans in the Revolutionary War: 1. The evacuation of Boston by Gen. Howe in 1775, when every British soldier was removed from New England. 2. The surrender of Burgoyne in 1777, which included an entire army. 3. The surrender of Lord Cornwallis in 1781, which was the loss of another army. The number of men, of course, would not bear comparison with those engaged in the wars of Frederic of Prussia and the Empress Maria Theresa. Nevertheless, the completeness

of the disaster, the critical period of its occurrence, and its dramatic character, greatly effected public opinion, both in England and all Europe. The evacuation of Boston had given our friends in France and elsewhere hope in the possible success of our arms; and the surrender at Saratoga confirmed this hope into conviction and removed hesitation on the part of the French Court. Accordingly, in the month of December the American Commissioners at Paris were secretly notified that Louis XVI was ready to acknowledge the independence of the Thirteen States and to make a treaty of alliance and commerce with the new nation.

The history of the first French mission may deserve a brief mention. In November, 1776, a Frenchman appeared at Philadelphia and asked to be permitted to communicate with the Congress. He appeared totally unworthy of credit, but Messrs. Jefferson, Jay and Franklin had a conference with him at the Carpenters' Hall. He would not give his name or exhibit credentials, but assured them confidently that whatever they wanted of arms, ammunition, money or ships would be gladly supplied from France. Then making his *conge*, he departed and was never seen again. Forcibly impressed by his words the committee were able to induce the Congress to appoint a committee to correspond "with friends in Great Britain, Ireland and other parts of the world." A most discouraging delay now supervened. Summer was passed into Autumn when Dr. Franklin received a letter from M. Dubourg containing assurances of sympathy and help from France.

On the 21st of September, Franklin, Silas Deane and Arthur Lee were appointed Commissioners to the French Court. A few weeks later took place the surrender of Burgoyne. The news reached Paris on the 4th of December and the public cry demanded that the Government unite its fortunes with America. Negotiations were speedily begun, and on the sixth of February, 1778, two treaties were executed, one of friendship and commerce, and one of defensive alliance in case that Great Britain should declare war against France. The object being to assure commercial and political independence, it was pledged by both parties that no peace should be concluded till that end had been attained, and then only by mutual consent. In these treaties the King of France declared in these words, "his intention that the terms should be such as we might be willing to agree to just as if our State had been long established and in the fullness of strength; that he would support our independence by every means in his power, and if he should get into war thereby he would expect no compensation from us on that account; also, that if he did engage in a war with England on our account we could make a separate peace for ourselves whenever good terms were offered to us," the only condition being "*that we in no case if peace was made with England should give up our independence and return to obedience to that government.*"

The treaties set forth further that we should be faithful allies, and that our commerce as well as our government

should be independent. The King "renounced forever the possession of the Island of Bermuda as well as any part of the continent of North America, heretofore called British Colonies." In the "Diary of the Revolution" the author says "The Treaty of Commerce is an act without parallel. In a word, the sentiments delivered on December 16th by Monsieur Gerard, by order of the King of France are sentiments rarely entertained by princes, and which, together with these remarkable treaties, must rank him, not only among the greatest monarchs of France, but in history."

On the 13th of March the information of these treaties was communicated to the British Court. The English Ambassador was at once recalled from Paris, which was virtually a declaration of war. The French Treaties were ratified by the American Congress on the 5th of May. The greatest enthusiasm prevailed. The hereditary hatred toward France which had hitherto existed in America was changed to respect, gratitude and affection. In the British Parliament the most virulent debates now took place. The Opposition were decided in advocacy of acknowledging the independence of the Colonies. A protracted war with France as a party to it, they declared, would involve great loss to British commerce. The Earl of Chatham, in the House of Lords, was protesting eloquently against the dismemberment of the British Empire, when he fell in a fainting fit. Almost at the same time General Burgoyne, at home a prisoner on parole, coolly took his seat in the House of Commons and *vehemently denounced the inefficient conduct*

of the war. It must be acknowledged that there was a disposition exhibited at the first to discredit the French alliance. The Philadelphia *Ledger* openly favored reconciliation with England, and denounced the French as an "ambitious and treacherous power," a people led by the worst elements of the Romish Church. At a later period the failures of D'Estaing and others to accomplish what had been expected were made the subject of unfriendly criticism. Another sentiment ruled in the counsels of American patriots. The despondent and half-starved army at Valley Forge were elated at the news that a powerful champion had come to their aid, and made the welkin ring with their glad huzzas for France and Louis XVI. On the 5th of May the Commander-in-Chief issued a General Order for the celebration of the event, beginning with these words :

"It having pleased the Almighty Ruler of the Universe propitiously to defend the cause of the United American States and finally by raising up a powerful friend among the Princes of the Earth to establish our Liberty and Independence," etc.

The ratification of the French treaties had rendered all plans for conciliation hopeless. Nevertheless commissioners were appointed to offer terms of compromise to the insurgent Colonies. The French Ministry were alarmed. To close the breach between England and America would be fatal to her plans. Count Vergennes accordingly hastened to carry the treaties into effect.

Vice-Admiral Count D'Estaing was sent to America with a powerful fleet openly as auxiliary to the Americans. The British Ministry immediately gave orders for the evacuation of Philadelphia. With Count D'Estaing came M. Gerard de Rayneval, the French Envoy. A delegation from Congress, of which John Hancock was one, met the flag-ship at Chester, and going on board greeted M. Gerard in the warmest terms. The King of France was also eulogized as "the Protector of the Rights of Humanity," and afterward on every occasion of public demonstration that title was given him. M. Gerard proved an invaluable friend and counsellor.

Count D'Estaing had been charged with three missions which, as will be seen, were too onerous and difficult. He was instructed to blockade the British fleet in the Delaware, to promote revolt in Lower Canada, and to protect the French possessions in the West Indies and on the Continent. He had sailed directly to the Delaware in order to execute the first of these instructions, and was unsuccessful. The British Army acting under orders from home had evacuated Philadelphia and returned to New York, whither the fleet had already gone. On their way thither they were overtaken at Monmouth and defeated by those very men from Valley Forge whom they had before affected to despise. At this battle the young Marquis de La Fayette flattered himself, from his advanced position under General Lee, that he would win the first laurels of the day. Imagine his chagrin and mortification when that

officer commanded a retreat. Ever since his release from British captivity, General Lee exhibited coldness and more disaffection toward the American cause, if we refrain from a more just but harsher term. To the earnest appeal of Gen. La Fayette he coldly replied: "You do not know British soldiers, we cannot stand against them." "British soldiers have been beaten and may be again," said the intrepid La Fayette, "at any rate I am disposed to make the trial." Observing that Lee's actions were suspicious he promptly gave notice to the Commander-in-Chief that his presence on that part of the field was of the greatest importance. Lee's misconduct prevented the total rout of the British Army, but Washington reached the place in time to save the fortunes of the day.

I may mention just here that in the campaign of 1778 and 1779 in the Jerseys, La Fayette had with him in the service that distinguished Frenchman Armand Charles Tuffin, Marquis de la Rourie, who fought at Red Bank, Camden and Yorktown, and like the trusted Duportail was often with Washington at the headquarters in Morristown. Also another brave French officer, Count Duplessis, who fought nobly at Fort Mifflin and Red Bank, and of whom Washington says in a letter to Congress, "he possesses a degree of modesty not always found in men who perform brilliant actions."

After the battle of Monmouth a plan was agreed upon by Washington and D'Estaing for driving the British from Rhode Island. Gen. Sullivan was placed in command to

co-operate with the French forces. The campaign opened auspiciously, but was destined to close with bitter disappointment.

Upon the arrival of the French fleet, July 29th, the British hastened to destroy ten of their vessels, lest they should become prizes to the victors, and two commanders next agreed to attack the enemy in his intrenchments, but on that very day a British fleet of thirty-six vessels appeared and D'Estaing put forth to meet them. A terrible storm arose, which discomfited Gen. Sullivan on shore and compelled the Admiral to desist from an engagement which he had begun with great enthusiasm and every hope of success. He sailed for Boston to repair, and at the very time when victory seemed in reach of the American forces, and the British army at Newport likely to meet the fate of Burgoyne, he sailed for the West Indies to fight the enemy there. Necessary as this movement might have been to French interests, it was most unfortunate for the Americans. A victory in Rhode Island in 1779 would probably have terminated the war. Gen. Sullivan protested in severe terms. At this the Admiral remonstrated, but was soothed by an explanation which may remind us of some of the occurrences of our late Civil War. D'Estaing was a soldier, and his chief officers on the French fleet resented the placing of a military officer in a naval command over them. They did not scruple to embarrass his movements in various ways and to prevent their success. They stand justly

chargeable, therefore, with the great failure. "The Count himself wished to remain with us," Gen. Sullivan wrote to Washington, "but was overruled in council by his captains." To have deviated from the advice of his council would have been attended with ill consequences to him in case of misfortune.

Having captured St. Vincent and Granada, D'Estaing lost no time in returning to our shores. He co-operated with Gen. Lincoln in unsuccessful attack upon Savannah, and after the final repulse sailed again for the West Indies and returned at once to France. He had failed in all he had undertaken, yet his services both to America and his own Government were of great importance. He captured a number of armed and transport ships, opened the southern ports to trading vessels, and destroyed the prestige of the British navy on the sea. He was energetic, adventurous and indefatigable, and as ardent and enthusiastic as a youth. It must in justice be added that he made the British project to detach Georgia and the Carolinas from the American Confederation impracticable. Sir Henry Clinton pronounced his operations highly disastrous to British interests, yet, even though the military and naval co-operation of the French did not realize that which had been hoped and expected, the other advantages from the alliance were most important. The influence upon the politics and action of other European States was invaluable. Russia never hesitated to express sympathy with the new nation. Spain adhered to the Royal Family Alliance, and joined France in active military opera-

tions. The opposition in England was encouraged to demand the suspension of hostilities. Lord North himself desired peace on honorable terms; indeed, it would have been conceded at this very time, but for the excessive and unreasonable pride and obstinacy of the British King.

France was as liberal with her money as with her military forces. Between the years 1778 and 1783 she lent this country nearly \$3,500,000, besides guaranteeing a loan of \$1,750,000, from Holland and paying the interest. In addition to these sums the King, Louis XVI, in 1783 made us a present of a million of dollars outright. The French Ambassador actually supported several members of Congress who were not able under the impoverished state of their private fortunes to remain at Philadelphia. Large sums also were contributed by individuals—grand men like Beaumarchais, who was but partly repaid for his advances, and then reluctantly, after half a century had elapsed.

The next scene in the drama exhibits our constant friend and ally, Gen. La Fayette, in another and still more illustrious light. The course of his distinguished countryman and relative, Count D'Estaing, had been to him a most bitter disappointment. He now resolved to go back to France himself and try his own efforts. The romantic story, the heroism and achievements of this youth of 22, had made him the idol of the French nation. He was also a favorite of the young King. He procured an agreement from Louis XVI to send to this country six vessels of the line and 6,000 troops afterward increased to 12,000, to serve under the

direction and orders of Gen. Washington. He also purchased a large outfit of arms and clothing, which he afterwards distributed gratuitously to the men under his command.

The arrival of Count de Rochambeau at Newport, July 10, 1780, showed that France was now determined to support America with her entire power. The most illustrious of the French nobility came with the army. It was a galaxy of noble names. There was the Baron and Count de Viomenil, the brave Counts William and Christian de Deux Ponts, the no less courageous Vis count de Rochambeau, the handsome Count de Fersen, the fascinating Duke de Lauzun, the lively and impressionable M. De Tilly, the gallant and gifted Viscount de Noailles; also Counts de Damas and de Segur, the witty M. Blanchard, Chevalier de Chastellux, the clever historian; the accomplished Chevalier de Lameth and the unfortunate Count de Custine; also the accomplished soldier Duportail, so constantly with Washington at Morristown and Yorktown; the warm hearted and volatile Fleury and Count Duplessis, as modest as he was gallant, and others equally celebrated and illustrious followed the troops. Delay, however, rendered it impossible to realize the expected achievements of 1780. A British fleet long blockaded the French squadron at Brest, and Washington felt keenly the failure of the latter to arrive. He writes respecting it: "Disappointed of the second division of French troops, but more especially in the expected naval superiority, which was the pivot

upon which everything turned, we have been compelled to spend an inactive campaign, after a flattering prospect at the opening of it, and vigorous struggles to make it a decisive one on our part." *

Money and a naval force were the two pressing wants of the hour. There had been more reasons than this for discouragement. A cabal in Congress had been eager to remove him from command, and had so far carried out their purpose as to made subordinate officers almost independent of his authority. At the same time, as at Saratoga, the most efficient of his troops were detached and placed under these officers, while he was regarded as accountable for not accomplishing more satisfactory results. In conformity to this policy, Gen. Gates had been placed in command, first in New York, then in New England and finally at the South. The defeat at Camden, threatening as it was to the stability of the American Confederation, served the purpose to put an end to the intrigues in Congress. The treason of Gen. Arnold, however, was even more disheartening. "Whom can we trust?" was the cry that this intelligence elicited from the Commander-in-Chief. His prompt measures, however, prevented the treason from going further or working any advantage to the British cause. The sad experiences of 1780 were, indeed, salutary. They had cleared the political atmosphere and made it easier to organize victory.

Lord Cornwallis had regarded Georgia and the Carolinas as permanently subjected. The operations of Generals

* Sparks's Writings of Washington, VII., 337.

Greene and Morgan disabused him somewhat of that illusion. He perceived that Virginia must probably be his decisive battle ground. General Washington accordingly sent General La Fayette thither with 1,200 men to act in conjunction with the local militia and a naval force detached from the French squadron under M. de Tilly. The little fleet was soon successful in capturing prizes, on one of which, the *Romulus*, they found £10,000 and clothing, destined for General Arnold's troops. A second expedition under M. Destanches, with Baron Viomenil and a land force, proved less successful and returned to New York shortly after.

Colonel Rochambeau, who had been sent to France, arrived on the 6th of May at Boston, accompanied by M. de Barras, the new commander of the French squadron at Newport, bringing the intelligence that Count de Grasse had sailed from Brest with a powerful fleet which should defend the French possessions. Only 500 troops could be spared for the American service, but the King had as an equivalent sent six millions in money, so greatly needed. M. de Barras lost no time in reporting to the American commander. A conference was held at Weathersfield, which he did not attend. Washington was attended by Generals Knox and Duportail; Rochambeau, by the Chevalier de Chastelleux. The policy was now agreed upon, to leave Count de Barras at Newport, for its defense, and to operate directly against New York, sending no more troops southward.

A word here may give us a better view of the discretion and ability of the French General. Upon his arrival at Newport in July, 1780, he was eagerly importuned by the young Marquis de La Fayette to begin offensive operations against the British forces. Rochambeau replied, calling attention to the superior numbers of the enemy and their support by an imposing navy :

"It is always well, my dear Marquis," he wrote, "to believe that the French are invincible, but I will confide to you a great secret ; after an experience of forty years I must tell you that there are none more easily beaten when they have lost confidence in their leader ; and they lose it immediately when they suspect that they have been compromised by a private and personal ambition. If I have been happy enough to keep till the present time the confidence of those who follow me, it is because that after the most scrupulous examination of my conscience I can safely assert, that of about 15,000 men who have been killed under my orders, I cannot reproach myself with the death of one."

On the 11th of June, 1781, the camp of eleven months at Newport was broken up and the troops set out for their new point of destination. They had made themselves popular, and their march was greeted as a military triumph. Perhaps the old jest was as true then as afterward, "Our people love to celebrate victories before the battle is fought." The troops were entertained all the way by the people and everywhere hailed as the deliverers of America. Exact discipline and freedom from trespass upon private

property characterized their entire march. Du Ponceau, who assisted Baron Steuben in preparing his "Army Discipline," writes that "the army of Rochambeau at this date was so thoroughly well conducted that not a soldier took even an apple or a peach from an orchard without leave having been previously obtained, and it was given out in General Orders that in case of any dispute between a Frenchman and an American the former should be punished whether he was in the right or wrong, and this rule was strictly adhered to. I believe there is no example of anything similar in history." (See Penn., Mag. of Hist. and Biog., II, 24.)

Arriving at the Hudson the united forces lay encamped six weeks. It soon became apparent that it would be impracticable to make a general attack upon New York without a superior naval force. A correspondence between General Rochambeau and Count de Grasse had impressed the latter with the distresses of the Southern States, and above all of Virginia, which had nothing to oppose the inroads of Cornwallis except the small body of troops under La Fayette. As the proposed attack upon New York was under contemplation, a letter came to Newport from the Count stating that he would sail from San Domingo with his entire fleet and 3,200 land troops, for the Chesapeake Bay. At once the two Generals resolved to abandon the attempt upon New York and to enter upon a campaign against Cornwallis.

On the 21st of July the American Army crossed the

Hudson at Stony Point, and the French two days later. The two armies took different routes and the appearance of threatening New York was sedulously kept up. The French passed through Chatham, Whippany, Springfield and New Brunswick, as if to menace Staten Island or occupy Sandy Hook with a view to facilitate the entrance of the French fleet into New York harbor. The march was meanwhile continued to Trenton and thence to Philadelphia, where the army arrived September 4th. Their reception there was a grand ovation. They marched through the town with music, the streets were crowded, and ladies splendidly attired thronged the windows. They next marched in single file before the Congress and the Chevalier de la Luzerne, the French Ambassador, and the next day went through the exercise of fire-arms. The spectators, twenty thousand in number, were surprised and enraptured at the perfection of their evolutions.

"This day was destined for favorable omens," wrote de Chastellux. The French Ambassador had invited all the officers to dine with him. As they were seated at the table an express was received. The host hurried to relieve the general anxiety. "Thirty-six ships of the line, commanded by M. le Comte de Grasse, have arrived in Chesapeake Bay," he said, "and 3,600 men have landed and opened communications with the Marquis de La Fayette." Joy and exultation beamed on every countenance and everyone predicted a speedy conclusion of the struggle. The news spread all over Philadelphia; the residence of the French

minister was thronged by crowds, and the air rang with the cry of "Long live Louis XVI." It was this same Philip Louis Marquis de Chastellux to whom, upon his marriage in 1787, Washington wrote the following most witty letter: "I saw by the eulogium you often made on the happiness of domestic life in America that you had swallowed the bait and that you would as surely be taken one day or another as that you were a philosopher and a soldier. So your day has at length come. I am glad of it, with all my heart and soul. It is quite good enough for you. Now you are well served for coming to fight in favor of the American rebels all the way across the Atlantic ocean, by catching that terrible contagion, *domestic felicity*, which, like the small-pox or the plague, a man can have only once in his life."

On the fifth of September Admiral Graves appeared off Chesapeake Bay and was promptly encountered by the Count de Grasse, losing two frigates in the contest. It had not been the purpose of the Count at first to operate in the Chesapeake, but to proceed to New Foundland with a view to the recovery of Canada. At the entreaty of both Generals Washington and Rochambeau, he changed his purpose and arrived at the Chesapeake at the moment most fortunate as well as propitious for the American cause.

The several commanders reached Williamsburgh September 14th. This was the Capital of Virginia, and here were the headquarters of the Marquis de La Fayette. The ardent young Frenchman was everjoyed to greet the Com-

mander-in-Chief. For months, with a small force, he had been employed in protecting Virginia from the troops of Lord Cornwallis, often barely escaping capture. When the latter finally took possession of Yorktown, he had not a doubt that he would soon complete his operations by this achievement. "The boy cannot escape me," was his boast to Sir Henry Clinton. But La Fayette was not so easy to find. He would dart forward as if to engage in General battle, and as suddenly retire. He had the knowledge of Cornwallis' movements and intentions, and was able to deceive him in regard to his own. The arrival of the investing armies from the North put an end to his danger and anxiety. Word was given to Count de Grasse and a conference was held on board his flag-ship. The Admiral desired to leave a small force to hold the Bay and employ the rest in active operations outside. The best strategists of the army were aware that Cornwallis could not sustain himself. But Generals Washington and Rochambeau desired to make sure without risking too much. At their entreaty he consented to remain and blockade the Bay, while the armies should operate directly upon Yorktown.

An amusing story is related of this interview. (Curtis' Recollections.) As General Washington reached the quarterdeck of the "Ville de Paris," the flag-ship, Admiral de Grasse embraced him, kissing him on each cheek. As he hugged him, he uttered the French phrase of endearment: "*Mon cher petit General* (my dear little General.)"

The Count was tall, but so, too was Washington. The term *petit*, or little, applied to his large and commanding person was too much for his companions. The French, true to the ancient, rigid etiquette, preserved gravity as best they could, but General Knox, "regardless of all rules laughed, and that aloud, till his fat sides shook again."

On the 27th of September, General Washington issued an order of battle, and on the 28th the entire combined army was put in motion ; on the 30th Yorktown was completely invested. On the left were the French, on the right the Americans. The former were commanded by the Viscount and Baron Viomenil and the Marquis De St. Simon ; the latter by Baron Steuben, Generals Wayne, La Fayette and Lincoln. The siege was conducted with great vigor and precision. General Washington spent the first night before Yorktown under a mulberry tree. His anxiety must have been intense. The army before him was composed of veteran troops, commanded by one of the ablest British Generals, well supplied and confident. He had but one officer competent to direct a siege, to oppose to men adepts in the art and science of military defense. It is due to the troops to say that the orders of Baron Steuben were promptly obeyed, and that the French forces were equally energetic. On the 6th of October the first parallel was established within six hundred yards of the British works, and on the 11th the second was opened three hundred yards nearer. The French in this siege were rivals to each other ; each officer was envious of every one

sent on a dangerous attempt. They exposed themselves needlessly to examine the works of the enemy and advanced outposts. Common soldiers rivaled the officers in daring enterprises. General Rochambeau himself, to settle a question, left the trenches, descended into the ravine, ascended the opposite escarpment and approached the enemy's redoubt, up to the abattis surrounding it.

General La Fayette and Baron Viomenil were appointed to capture the two redoubts which embarrassed our operations. A friendly rivalry existed between these two officers. Colonel Alexander Hamilton led the American storming party, and Count William Deux Ponts the French. La Fayette carried his redoubt five minutes the sooner, owing to not waiting to remove the abattis. The British soldiers were generally half drunk when fighting, and such was the case at this time. The bombardment was now kept up without cessation for five days. The earthworks afforded but inadequate defense. An attempt at sortie was repulsed, then escape was attempted, and finally, on the 17th of October, Lord Cornwallis offered to surrender. The mistake of D'Estaing at Savanna in giving twenty-four hours was not repeated, and in two hours Cornwallis had acceded to the terms of capitulation, with "the same honors as were granted to the American garrison at Charleston." The Commissioners negotiating the treaty of capitulation were Lieutenant-Colonel Dundas and Major Ross on the part of the British ; Viscount de Noailles and Lieutenant-Colonel Laurens on the part of the Americans.

Mr. G. W. Parke Curtis remarks: "Here, as at Stony Point, notwithstanding the provocation to retaliate, which was justified by the inhuman massacres of Paoli and Fort Griswold, mercy, divine mercy, perched triumphant on our country's colors.

Imagine the emotions of the Commander-in-Chief as he signed the compact of capitulation that memorable 19th of October. "A glorious moment for America," wrote General Knox to his wife. "The play is over and the fifth act has closed," said La Fayette. It was a proud day for him; he had coped with Cornwallis and mastered him in tactics; he had received the highest honor, commanding alternately three Field Marshals of France and the troops under them. "The General congratulates the army upon the glorious event of yesterday," was the opening sentence of an order by the Commander-in-Chief. Then he praised the King of France, Admiral de Grasse, General Rochambeau, Baron de Viomenil; his own Generals, Lincoln, La Fayette and Steuben, to whom he was personally attached; naming others till his paper would hardly hold out; and finally adding that his thanks if given to each individual of merit in the army would comprehend them all.

It was the wish of General Washington to follow up this victory by the long-deferred attack upon New York. He believed it was easy now to drive the enemy from our soil. Perhaps he was right. With him, years of disaster were insufficient to obliterate hope of final success, and

he hardly permitted the ardor of victory to overcome his judgment. If his purpose had been carried into effect the first years of the new nation would not have been clouded by British arrogance and pusillanimity.

Both de Grasse and Rochambeau opposed this proposition. The Admiral had been commanded to go to the aid of the Spanish allies in the West Indies and would do no more; General Rochambeau was not willing to engage in another campaign that same year. It is not necessary to recapitulate the history of the ensuing year. The French army remained in Virginia till the next season, and then returned to the North, receiving the most cordial and flattering attentions along their route. It having finally been decided that there would be no more further service required of them in America they proceeded to Boston to embark for the West Indies. They had already imbibed the American sentiment of liberty. "I was obliged," says Count Segur, "to keep, night and day, a strict watch. The prospect of happiness which liberty presented to the soldiers in this country, had created in them a desire to quit their colors and remain in America."

While at Boston the French officers were treated with marked distinction. The Legislature paid a congratulatory visit to the Baron de Viomenil, and Samuel Adams addressed him in their behalf. A dinner was given to the French officers, at which General Hancock presided. One day the Rev. Dr. Cooper addressed them in these prophetic words: "Take care," said he, "take care, young men, lest the

triumph of the cause on this virgin soil should too much influence your hopes. You will carry away with you the germs of these generous sentiments; but if you ever attempt to propagate them on your native soil, after so many ages of corruption, you will have to surmount far different obstacles. It has cost us much blood to conquer liberty, but you will have to shed it in torrents before you can establish it in Europe."

"How many times," says Count Damas, "during our political storm, during our fatal days, have I called to mind those prophetic warnings; but the inestimable prize which the Americans obtained by their sacrifice was always present to my mind."

Many did make America their future home, and others who returned to France were eager to go once more to the United States. The enthusiasm of liberty enkindled there continued its impulse till not only revolution but a new book of history was begun in Europe.

There is, however, much that is painful in the retrospect. Count de Grasse, to whom we owed so much in the last scenes of our drama, went hence only to encounter melancholy reverses of fortune. He engaged in several naval conflicts, finally suffering capture by Admiral Rodney, April 12, 1782. It was one of the revenges of history that on that occasion his flag-ship, the *Ville de Paris*, was encountered by the *Canada*, commanded by Captain Cornwallis, and after a fierce struggle, in which but three men were left alive on his vessel, was forced to strike her colors.

Thus the English officer avenged the fate of his more celebrated brother at Yorktown. Losing the favor of his King for that misfortune, de Grasse never returned to active service. "Brave and good as the Captain of a ship," says Guerin, "the Count de Grasse was an embarrassing commander and a still more ill-starred Admiral." His last years were unhappy, and he finally died in January, 1788. Washington learning of this, wrote to Rochambeau: "His frailties should be buried with him in the grave, while his name will be long deservedly dear to this Country." His six daughters came to this country as exiles during the French Revolution, and a pension of \$10,000 a year was settled on them, while his son, the Count de Tilly, was employed as an engineer.

Count D'Estaing, when he returned home, was received by the King with flattering distinction. In 1783 he commanded the combined fleets of France and Spain, and in 1787 became Commandant of the National Guards. He was finally arrested as a suspect, and having given testimony in favor of the Queen at her trial, he was himself tried in 1794 and beheaded.

General Rochambeau, after his return from America, received the merited office of Marshal of France. He afterward fell under the displeasure of the Revolutionary Tribunal and was condemned to death. The death of Robespierre, however, saved him from execution, and he lived to hold honorable place under the Empire. He was waiting at the hospital, he says, where thirteen persons

were inmates, when the officer came in and brought twelve "acts of accusation," to accompany the Princess Elizabeth. Rochambeau was listening for his own name, when the first officer cried out: "Didst thou not hear, Marshal, that I said on entering, there is nothing for thee?" "I am deaf," replied Rochambeau, "thou canst surely repeat it to me."

The Duke de Lauzun after his return to France was elected to the States General. He also served in the army of the Republic in Corsica, Savoy and La Vendee; but his lenity lost him favor, and he was condemned and beheaded the last day of the year 1793. Many anecdotes are related concerning him. One day a countryman in Connecticut asked him what trade his father followed. Greatly amused he replied: "My father does nothing, but I have an uncle who is a blacksmith," (a *marechal*, alluding to Marshal de Biron). "Good, good," cried the man, shaking his hand warmly, "it is a capital trade."

Perhaps, however, no man has been more diversely or so inconclusively judged as the Marquis de La Fayette. On the one hand he has been praised as equal almost to Washington himself. Yet the first Napoleon describes him as "only a ninny, without civil or military talent, narrow minded and dissimulating, a sort of monomaniac, with whom blindness took the place of reason." The dominant weakness, however, appears to have been an excessive love of popularity, the only human recompense which he seems to have contemplated as the reward of all his efforts, and the immoderate pursuit of which appears to have resulted

in the most fatal errors of his life. But it seems hardly grateful to criticise him. In our cause he enlisted with an ardent, youthful enthusiasm; he contributed freely of his private fortune; he gave his best energies. If we name his love of popularity the "passion for glory," it seems hardly a weakness, but a characteristic honorable to its possessor.

It has been contemplated to place on the proposed monument to La Fayette in the city of Washington the four subordinate figures of Rochambeau, the Chevalier Duportail Count de Grasse, and Count D'Estaing. In this selection the Washington Association of New Jersey, the Society of the Sons of the Revolution, the South Carolina Society of Cincinnati, the New York as well as the New Jersey Historical Society concur. The Massachusetts Historical Society, however, dissents and recommends instead of the Count D'Estaing and Chevalier Duportail, the Baron de Viomenil and the Marquis de St. Simon.

It is no pleasing task to depreciate the services of any of our French allies at the time that "tried men's souls." Justice, however, demands at our hands to uphold the higher claim of the Chevalier Duportail. He was one of the first who came hither to help our cause. As early as February, 1777, he had committed his fortunes to the event and was placed on the staff of Gen. Washington. He served in America more than six years, enduring the same hardships and vicissitudes as our soldiers. He was admired and praised in both the allied armies and by their Commanders. At Yorktown he received the special acknowl-

edgement of Gen. Washington for his efficiency. Returning to France he received the dignity of Marechal de Champs and Minister of War. Resembling La Fayette in many respects, his history was very similar. Finally, having been accused in the time of the Revolution, he came to this country, where he remained ten years. While his services exceed six years, those of the Baron de Viomenil were but two years and nine months, little more than one-third as long. We do not care to depreciate the qualities of M. de Viomenil; he was a noble soldier and deserving the high esteem in which he was held by Count de Rochambeau, as Duportail was of the higher regard bestowed on him by Washington.

Why St. Simon should be proposed at all is beyond our power to surmise. He was simply a Spaniard, who fought as such, with no sympathy for the people or institutions of this country. He was a military man by profession, and went, in fact, whither he was ordered.

The Count D'Estaing was from the first a warm and earnest friend of America. Before he sailed for this country he had used all his powers and influence in our behalf. He was sincere and devoted. Upon his return to France he pleaded incessantly with the French Ministry to despatch a large force to our aid. Even though victory had been snatched from his reach by the inclement storm, he was none the less ready to engage in conflict. He never relaxed in his devotion to American interests.

We plead therefore that the honor which is contemplated

for our earliest and most constant friends, our French Allies, be extended to the men with whom LaFayette was most in sympathy. They amply proved their deserving, and what they accomplished was in a remarkable degree simply the extending and completing of what he himself had initiated. Duportail's acts were like his brave leader's, and won for the performer a rare degree of Washington's favor. D'Estaing was next in the place of honor, and his very presence here inspired a degree of hope and courage in our leaders and supporters which can not well be overestimated. He made future success more easy ; and though he made no such signal achievement as Rochambeau or De Grasse, he yet was as noble and worthy as they.

The monument which is contemplated will be an enduring testimonial of the Nation's gratitude, and it will be much more befitting if the statues of D'Estaing and the heroic Duportail with those of De Grasse and Rochambeau are placed there beside our most noble benefactor.

Do not these names, my friends, stand out in history as patriot heroes even more disinterested than our own Revolutionary or Pilgrim sires? For while it was for a Leonidas, a Tell, and an Alfred to dare and suffer long for their native land, these heroic spirits went forth from their homes to combat on a far distant shore for the national life of an almost unknown people. While it was Luther and the Reformation which laid the foundation of the rights of man in society, so it was our American Revolution which established his political and civil freedom; and to our suc-

cess in this great struggle, France generously contributed her millions and sacrificed the lives of many of her bravest sons. Therefore we cannot cease to remember her with gratitude, and especially at this time, so near to the Centennial of the Inauguration of the first President of this now great, glorious and successful Republic.

Fort Stanwix and Battle of Oriskany.

BY

J. C. PUMPELLY.

*An address delivered before the Society of the Sons of the
Revolution, in New York City, Dec. 3, 1888.*

Mr. President and Members of the Society of the Sons of the Revolution:—Just so surely as there is a power in this world that makes towards righteousness, so there is a power that makes towards patriotism, and we find in this Society, young as it is, such an influence going out among our people—a historical spirit whose inspiration is fed by such events as we commemorate to-night, and whose impulses are wise, conservative, and uplifting.

There have always been districts of the earth where nations and armies have had their decisive battles. Belgium, from Julius Caesar until now, has been the battlefield of Europe. There in 1815 the fate of that country was determined—whether it was to be French or National. So we may say that the State of New York, the valleys of the Mohawk and the Hudson, constituted the fighting ground

of the American Revolution. In Colonial days Charles II. was assured of no foothold on this continent until he had become master of that region; and when we recall that the ancestors of those who fought at Oriskany passed in 1683 the "Charter of Liberties," we know of what heroic stuff his colonists were made, and how fearlessly they defended their rights.

English statesmen saw also that more than all the South, Philadelphia, and the Island of New York, that *this region* was the very eye of the campaign of 1777. So it came about that a well-devised plan was formed in England for the grasping of this key to the continent.

Clinton, the Commander-in-Chief, was to start from New York and follow up the Hudson; General Burgoyne with his 7,000 men was to approach from the north by the way of Lake Champlain; while Col. Barry St. Leger with his 1,700 Tories and Indians was to come from Oswego on down the Mohawk Valley, joining the leaders of the other two expeditions at Albany when their work was completed. All these expeditions were well appointed, the officers able, and the armies thoroughly equipped. Sir William Johnson had sagaciously provided for the sustaining of the British power in the Mohawk country, and his mantle had fallen upon his equally able but more unscrupulous son.

By these men, aided by Brant, the famous chief, the whole Indian Confederacy, except the Oneidas, had been allied to the British cause, and this alone was a serious

menace to the patriot cause. Yet, in the Providence of God, who is not necessarily on the side of the heaviest battalions, none of these expeditions, as history tells us, ever reached their destination.

In this year of 1777, so full of gloom for our cause, if Burgoyne was successful New England was in danger of being cut off from all communication with the other colonies; and as in that day when Lexington fired the "gun that was heard round the world," every county was awake to the importance of a most vigorous resistance.

Fortunately there was no division in the East, and the army of General Schuyler was promptly recruited from Massachusetts and Connecticut.

It was this able commander who "made the lock and fitted the key" which the self-lauded Gates had but to turn and the defeat of Cornwallis was assured. It was Schuyler also whose characteristic forethought secured important defenses in the Mohawk Valley—one of which was located at a point between Wood Creek and the Mohawk, and was named Fort Stanwix. Right in the pathway of St. Leger was this fort, and he must perforce take it or fail in his expedition.

That he did so fail, with all the advantages he possessed, is to me another striking proof that the cause of the colonists was under the protection of that all-wise Ruler whose arm is ever bared for the defense of His people.

St. Leger had a force of 1,700 troops,—the flower of Burgoyne's army. Tryon County was full of Tories, every

family almost having in it the partisans of the king ; and Sir John Johnson and the murderous thug, Zebulon Butler, had formed them into military organizations. The Mohawk Indians, the most sanguinary of all the Iroquois, led by Brant, cooperated with the British. As if to abet English cruelty by the incentive of cupidity, St. Leger offered £20 (English pounds) for every American scalp. Not only soldiers were mutilated, but young boys and girls were waylaid and murdered in order to receive this infamous guerdon.

The Oneidas were faithful to the American cause. They even offered to break the ancient league and add their forces to those of the colonists ; but considerations of policy led to a waiving of this proposition, which, if accepted, would have prevented St. Leger from reaching Fort Stanwix prior to the capture of Burgoyne. As it was, the Oneidas kept the garrison at Fort Stanwix and the Committee of Safety at German Flats carefully informed of the counsels of the Six Nations and the movements of the British troops.

Now, at this date, August, 1777, Colonel Peter Gansevoort, a brave officer twenty-eight years of age, was in command at Fort Stanwix, and was soon after joined by Lieutenant-Colonel Marinus Willett, an experienced soldier, thoroughly versed in border warfare ; with his regiment the garrison now amounted to 550 men.

The emergency required all the skill, energy, and courage of both officers. In a letter to General Schuyler,

dated July 4th, Colonel Gansevoort writes : " Owing to the increasing number of hostile Indians, 150 men would be needed to obstruct Wood Creek, an equal number to guard the men at work felling and hauling timber. Beef is spoiled, bullets do not suit the firelocks, a ton of powder is needed. We will, notwithstanding every difficulty, exert ourselves to the utmost of our power, and if your Excellency will order a speedy re-enforcement and needed supplies to enable us to hold out a siege, *we will* be able to give a good account of any force that will probably come against us."

On the 2d of August, the day of the investment of the fort by St. Leger's forces, Lieutenant-Colonel Mellon, of Colonel Weston's regiment, arrived with 200 men and two bateaux of provisions and military stores. They reached the fort just as the enemy appeared on the skirts of the forest ; so near were they that the captain who commanded the boats was made prisoner. The command now consisted of 750 men all told ; six weeks' provisions, and a fair supply of ammunition ; but the garrison was without a flag. 'Twas then and there, by these unskillful but heroic hands, that the standard which was to be the first to be lifted unfurling the Stars and Stripes in victorious battle was made in the garrison out of odds and ends of clothing. Pieces of white were taken from shirts, the blue was from a camlet cloak of Captain Swartout's, and the stripes from a woman's scarlet mantle.

On the 3d of August a flag was sent into the fort from

the enemy with messages full of vaunting threats and lavish promises, all of which produced no effect upon the brave and intrepid commander. Hostilities commenced on August 4th, the Indians concealing themselves behind trees and by their fire greatly annoying the men employed upon the parapets.

It was at this time St. Leger in vain over-confidence sent his message to Burgoyne that the fort would be his directly, and that they would speedily meet as victors in Albany.

St. Leger's appearance in the valley had roused the yeomanry to a sudden and full comprehension of the peril of their situation, and they forthwith gave the command of the militia to Nicholas Herkimer, who had served in the French war and been made a brigadier-general the year before. He was a brave soldier and a Christian man, who had used his best efforts to dissuade the Indians from taking part in the conflict and had sent to Unadilla a mission to this end, which the Indian chief Brant had taken pains to oppose and thwart.

In reply to a proclamation issued by him for a force to go to the relief of Fort Stanwix and its brave defenders, every patriot heart was stirred, and though some of his own family refused to join him, and even went over to the side of the enemy, he succeeded in assembling together at Fort Dayton, now Herkimer village, on the 4th of August, 1777, about 800 fighting men. Each farmer seized his trusty musket and, leaving his plow in the furrow, hurried to the

rendezvous. The need was urgent and the time for preparation so brief that the Scotch-Irish of Cherry Valley, always foremost, nearly lost the opportunity of taking their share in the expedition of succor.

The principal rallying point was German Flats, and here gathered Colonels Klock, Visseher, Cox, Bellinger, with whatever number of their regiments, as well as volunteers, could be collected; there also came the Committee of Safety of Tryon County.

Through information given by Molly, the sister of Joseph Brant and wife of Johnson, St. Leger was made acquainted with this projected movement of the patriots, who were by this time hurrying forward without order or protection against flanking parties.

Thomas Spencer and others of the friendly Oneidas who were with General Herkimer besought him to send out scouts and move cautiously, and he promised to do so; but when, on the 5th of August, at Whitestone, he urged this course he was opposed by Colonels Cox, Paris, and others, who advised more haste, and was even taunted with cowardice. Great as he knew the danger must be, and feeling as he did that he was as it were the father of his company, he reluctantly gave the order for an immediate advance, for this taunt was too much for his fiery spirit.

By the orders of St. Leger, who knew he must at all hazards prevent any defeat at this juncture, scouts had been placed all along the trail, and Joseph Brant, with a force of picked men, had taken a position in ambush about the semi-circular ravine by the Oriskany Creek.

The message for assistance sent Colonel Gansevoort at the fort eight miles away had not been replied to. The morning was hot and sultry when, at 10 o'clock, the force of devoted men entered the fatal ravine. Suddenly the forest rang with the crack of rifles and the war-whoop of the savage, and the guards both front and rear were shot down by a volley which seemed to come out from every tree of the forest. The fierce Mohawks sprang from their coverts tomahawk in hand, the rear-guard led by Colonel Fischer was cut off entirely, most of the force being taken prisoners and many of them killed on the spot. By the fatal circle formed by the enemy, the baggage and ammunition wagons were also cut off and separated from the main body. General Herkimer fell wounded in the early part of the action, a ball having killed his horse and shattered his leg just below the knee. When it was suggested he should be removed from the field he refused, saying, "I shall face the enemy," and his saddle being placed at the foot of a tree he sat upon it, coolly smoking his pipe while he gave his orders with telling effect. His men standing each one alone behind a tree would fire his piece, and, then, before he could reload, the watchful savage would immediately rush upon him with the tomahawk. Noting this manœuvre, the wary general immediately ordered them to fight in couples, so that when the enemy would hurry to murder the one who had just fired he would be shot down by the other.

This made the fray more terrible for the foe, though the

loss of the patriots was severe enough. Colonel Cox, who had that morning accused General Herkimer of cowardice, and Captains Davis and Van Sluyck were killed, and the whole patriot force was terribly broken up.

On the enemy's side the Indians had become disheartened by the loss of so many of their warriors, and the "Johnson Greens," a body of men from the Dutch and German settlements, were ordered to their help. The conflict now became fiercer than ever, as the men on each side recognized one another as neighbors, kindred, and even brothers. The closer the relationship the more deadly the encounter. There were no British soldiers, Hessians, or professional fighters there, but New York men, children of the soil almost exclusively. There were no lines, no fort, no artillery, but men fighting hand-to-hand with knife, musket, spear, hatchet, foot-to-foot, swaying and struggling over the bodies of the dead and slipping in their blood. The vale of Oriskany became the scene of the maddening slaughter; neighbors slew their neighbors, and brothers clasped brothers in deadly embrace. Never, even at Thermopylæ, did men stand a charge with more dauntless courage—a courage born of that grand spiritual force which had made liberty to their ancestors as dear as life itself. Three men charged upon Captain Gardenier, so history tells us, who transfixed them one by one with his pike.

Captain Dillenback also being attacked by a party beat one to the ground, shot another, and bayoneted a third before he fell himself.

For six long hours, under a burning sun, without even water to refresh themselves, this battle waged without cessation, except when a severe thunder-storm came down with such fury that the combatants were compelled to seek shelter.

At length firing was heard in the distance from the fort,—the answer to the long-delayed message of Herkimer,—and the sound was as welcome to the patriots as it was astounding to the enemy. Soon Colonel Willett, with his force, appeared on the field of battle. The Indians, taking fright, raised the cry of “Oonah” (retreat) and fled precipitately ; so also did the Tories and the “Greens,” amidst the shouts and hurrahs of the militia of Tryon County, who were left masters of the field. Colonel Willett captured twenty-one wagon-loads of baggage, clothing, and provisions, and five British flags, which he bore back in triumph underneath the folds of *the Stars and Stripes*,—*the flag those heroes had made with their own hands*.

A descendant of one of those who fought at Saratoga said to the writer : “It was fitting that this battle should be the occasion for the first raising of the American standard in victory. If the Declaration of Independence was the inception of a new nation, the bloody ravine of Oriskany was the place of its birth.”

Colonel Paris was captured by the Indians and afterwards cruelly murdered, as were other prisoners, after they reached Colonel Butler’s quarters. Major John Frey, of Colonel Klock’s regiment, was wounded and taken pris-

oner; his own brother, who was in the British service, attempted to take his life.

Almost every member of the Committee of Safety, and, in fact, every prominent man in the Mohawk Valley, was killed. Death was in every house. After the battle, Dr. Petrie, one of the survivors of the Committee of Safety, though himself severely wounded, dressed General Herkimer's leg and saw him sent on a litter to his home. It was there in that old house, which is still standing, as I am told by one whose ancestor was in Colonel Willett's regiment, that this brave Christian soldier died, with the open Bible in his hand. He died not from the wound being fatal, but from unskillful amputation.

The number of the Provincial militia in killed was 200, exclusive of wounded and prisoners, and the loss of the enemy was equally severe if not greater, especially among the Indians. Neither at Waterloo nor Austerlitz was the slaughter greater in proportion.

La Fayette once declared that there were only skirmishes, no battles, in the American Revolution. As compared with the battles in Europe this is true; but with the meager population of our country in 1777 these "skirmishes" had a significance equal to the actions at Lodi, Austerlitz, Leipsic, and Waterloo. Colonel Willett's sally from the fort with 200 men and 50 more to guard the light iron three-pound cannon was every way successful, and the charge was made with such celerity that Sir John Johnson, who was in his tent divested of his coat, had no time to even

put it on before his camp was attacked and his force routed, as were also the Indians; and all Sir John Johnson's baggage, papers, order-books, etc., were captured. For this exploit Congress presented Colonel Willett with a vote of thanks and an elegant sword.

So, also, in appreciation of the great services rendered by General Herkimer, Congress requested the Governor and Council of New York to erect a monument to his memory, but this was not done; but the State, however, did honor to itself by giving his name to one of the counties formed out of the division of Tryon County.

After the battle Colonel Samuel Campbell, then senior officer, reorganized the shattered patriot force and led them in good order back to Fort Dayton.

For sixteen days St. Leger lay before Fort Stanwix, which, in spite of peremptory demands and many lies, Colonel Gansevoort refused to surrender.

Colonel Willett, at tremendous risks, made a rapid march to Albany to obtain relief, which through Philip Schuyler's effort was granted, Benedict Arnold promptly offering his services, and on August 20th, with 800 volunteers, the latter reached Fort Dayton, and issued, as Commander-in-Chief of the Army of the United States of America in the Mohawk Valley, a proclamation denouncing St. Leger as a "leader of banditti, robbers, and murderers."

When on the 24th, with an added force of militia, he arrived at Fort Stanwix, St. Leger had raised the siege,

and in great fear of his Indian allies, who had already commenced to rob his camp, he fled, leaving his tents, artillery, and stores spoils to the garrison. His men threw away their packs in their flight, and St. Leger's rout was complete.

And so this key to the heart of the original union, this the very eye of the campaign of 1777, was held secure for the patriot cause.

And in a moral sense how great was the victory when we remember that the threatened and almost expected Tory uprising for the king never occurred, and instead disaffected yeomanry came out as brave patriots, and gave such a check to St. Leger as forced Burgoyne to take the risk which brought on him the defeat at Bennington and finally his surrender at Saratoga. This once famous general found himself in a sorry dilemma. He had been sent to America by a new ministry, whose existence was largely staked upon his success. Generals Howe and Carleton had been superseded, great hopes had been entertained of his success, and to a remarkable degree his progress from Canada to Saratoga had been triumphal. But now he had been effectually circumvented by General Schuyler. Western New York was lost, his troops had been driven from New England, and his only chance was to effect a union with Sir Henry Clinton at Albany.

We all know the result. The leaders in New England were jealous of General Schuyler, and a faction in Congress often operated prejudicially to the American cause.

General Gates, a rival of the Commander-in-Chief, was sent to supersede the brave New Yorker, who nevertheless remained and gave what assistance he might to his successor.

Sir Henry Clinton had made his way up the Hudson, burning towns on his route, when he learned of the capitulation at Saratoga. An army was lost, and the fact became patent that now only artifice and diplomacy could be successful. Pride on the part of the British king alone prolonged the contest, but the convention at Saratoga had assured the event.

The battle of Oriskany had turned the scale. While the battle of Bennington was won by Yankees, that of Oriskany by Dutch and German yeomanry, the militia at Saratoga came from both of these alike. "One of my grandfathers carried his musket there from Worcester County, Massachusetts," I heard one of Jersey's patriots say ; and almost every family in New England can tell a like story.

Now one thing seems plain to us all ; a greater meed of honor is due than has yet been given to the heroes of German Flats. Reason is, they have always been a clannish people, often speaking a different language and disrelishing English literature. The population in that region has been in too great a degree left out of our American histories. It should be our pride as Sons of the Revolution to see that this fault, if it exists, is corrected.

Oriskany was well named in the Indian tongue the "place of nettles." Surely out of these nettles of danger

brave Nicholas Herkimer plucked the Rose of Safety, for not only the Mohawk Valley, but the whole nation. In these days of foreign innovations and indifferentism, when party spirit strains fierce and hard upon the conscience and free-will of the citizen, let us, the sons of Revolutionary sires, stand firm in the faith of those brave Scotch, Dutch, and Huguenot fathers, and maintain to the uttermost and ever unimpaired the matchless institutions which they have handed down to us.

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